the number of such Exchanges in the urban areas; if so, the reasons therefor and by when Government propose to bring the number of such exchanges in the rural areas at par with that in the urban areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RADHAKISHAN MALAVIYA): (a) There were 841 Employment Exchanges (including University Employment Information and Guidance Bureaux) in the country as on 31st March, 1989.

(b) and (c) Most of the Employment Exchanges cater to both urban and rural areas irrespective of their location.

Number of Unemployed persons in the country

*269. SHRI LAL K. ADVANI:
SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of unemployed persons as on 31st December of 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and March 31st, 1989;

(b) the date when the practice began to strike-off those names from the employment registers, who did not seek renewal each year and whether every person (registered in the live registers) has informed of this new practice so that he or she could seek for renewal if he or she wished to continue his or her name there;

(c) whether this practice brings down the total estimated number of the unemployed; if so, what is their number;

(d) whether the placement number of about 388.5 thousand in 1985 came down to about 328.5 thousand in 1988; if so what it was on 31st March, 1989; and

(e) the reasons for the fall in placements since *1985?*

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RADHAKISHAN MALAVIYA): (a) The number of persons registered at the Employment Exchanges in the Country, all of whom are not necessarily unemployed, is given below:

	(In lakhs)
As on 31st December	
1985	262.70
1986	301.31
1987	302.47
1988	300.50
As on 31.3.1989	303.05

(b) With effect from 1-1-1984, the renewal period is 3 years and as such the registrants are not required to renew their registration every year. The registration is liable to be cancelled if it is not renewed in time. In the Identity Card issued to the registered candidates, the next date when renewal is due is indicated.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Yes, Sir. The number of placement during January-March 1989 was 69.1 thousand.

(e) Placements by Employment Exchanges depend, inter-alia, on the number of vacancies notified to them.

Amendment in Provident Fund Act

*270. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal under Government's consideration to make some amendments to the Provident Fund Act to make it more stringent enabling the attachment of the personal property of the directors of a company defaulting in the payment of the Provident Fund in order to recover the defaulted amount and to render its non-payment a non-bailable offence and for setting up special courts for the speedy disposal of default cases, etc;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and the steps Government propose to take to realise the mounting provident fund dues from the Jute Mill owners in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RADHAKISHAN MALAVIYA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) There is already a suitable provision in Section 8B (i) of the EPF Act providing *inter-alia* for recovery of the arrears of EPF dues by attachment and sale of movable and immovable property of the establishment and where necessary, the employer. This provision may be utilised for recovery of the arrears of Provident Fund dues from the jute mills.

Increase in the prices of cereals

*271. SHRI ANAND SHARMA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the sharp increase in the prices of cereals recently; and

(b) if so, what steps are proposed to be taken to check the price rise and to provide relief to the people?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) and (b) The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) of the cereals as a group has exhibited only a marginal increase in the first sixteen weeks of the current financial year (1989-90). The wholesale price indices of wheat and barley declined significantly and that of maize moderately. This was off-set by moderate increase in price indices of rice and kharif coarse grains. The slight rise in prices of cereals is normal, resulting from inter-seasonal variations.

2. As regards the measures to control price rise in cereals, the main thrust of the Government policy is to increase the production of cereals in order to ensure that market availability position remains satisfactory and prices are contained within reasonable limits. The prices of cereals, especially wheat and rice, are kept under constant review and if required imports are resorted to. The State Governments are also advised to take effective measures in implementing and strictly enforcing the provisions of Essential Commodities Act and other similar legislations to curb the activities of hoarders, black-marketeers and other anti-social elements.

National Readership Survey

*272. SHRI KAPIL VERMA:

SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent National Readership Survey, also covering the electronic media, conducted by the Operation Research Group which shows that about 57 per cent of the adult population of the Hindi speaking States has never been exposed to Doordarshan and also that 71.4 per cent of the people in this area have never been exposed to AIR Vividh Bharati Programme;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what percentage of the population in the Hindi Area is covered by Doordarshan and Akashvani?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT): (a) to (c) The Operations Research Group Report is basically a readership survey. Therefore, the primary focus of the study would be those persons who contribute to or subscribe to a newspaper. Since assessment of the reach of the electronic media was only a secondary objective, the findings of this survey cannot be